



The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Report by Carla Rogers
2002 Churchill Fellow



To investigate 'successful approaches by Government land management agencies to involve the community in protected area planning and management'.

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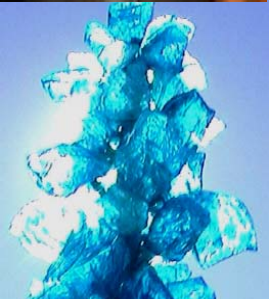
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THE JOURNEY

Why and how the community is involved in assisting Government planning processes has been of considerable personal, professional and intellectual interest to me. With the aid of a Churchill Fellowship grant, I was able to pursue this interest in the United States and Canada, investigating 'successful approaches by Government land management agencies to involve the community in protected area planning and management'. I chose to focus on protected area planning and management due to the challenges that it poses and the opportunities it presented, particularly identifying and connecting with communities of interest (international, national, local and 'future generations').

HIGHLIGHTS

- Meetings with over 100 people from National Park Service (USA) and Parks Canada.
- Annual Conferences of the International Association of Public Participation (Salt Lake City, Utah) and International Association of Facilitators (Fort Worth, Texas).
- 20 protected areas visited across 9 states and including 7 World Heritage Areas.
- Presentations made/ papers delivered to National Park Service, USA and International Association of Public Participation, Salt Lake City and fortnightly radio interviews with ABC Far South Coast (Bega).



KEY FINDINGS

The challenges that I explored and successful approaches outlined (or ‘neat ideas’) relate to the following six key themes:

- 1 **Consulting within legal frameworks:** how do you engage the community where the decision-making authority is legally mandated and rests with the agency (that is “we want your views but we make the decision”)?
- 2 **Accessibility and transparency:** how can you make both planning and community involvement programs open, transparent and accessible to a wide range of people?
- 3 **Capacity building (of communities and employees):** how do you build a ‘culture of participation’ ensuring that both staff and participants have the necessary power and skills to create this culture?
- 4 **Accountability:** how do you achieve accountability to the community for the progress and performance in the implementation of management plans?
- 5 **Indigenous peoples:** how do you effectively involve indigenous people in the preparation of management plans and ensure that this involvement is reflected in the plan itself?
- 6 **Relationships and trust:** what are some initiatives and programs that can help develop relationships outside of direct community involvement programs for management plans, thus building trust between the agency and the community?

For each challenge, the report outlines examples of successful approaches or ‘neat ideas’ from both the United States and Canada that could assist in improving current practice in Australia. There are more examples for some themes (for example consulting within legal frameworks) than others (for example involvement of indigenous peoples). Where I encountered practitioners in the United States and Canada looking to Australia for ideas/ new approaches, I shared information and suitable contact for innovative approaches within Australia. The identified ‘neat ideas’ form the basis of recommendations in the report.

SHARING MY FINDINGS

I believe that many of the successful approaches for community involvement explored, are relevant to Australian land management agencies and could assist with the evolution of our practice within Australia. I am excited about the opportunity to share ideas, with land management agencies, professional associations and the community. Current arrangements to share findings are detailed in the report.

For a copy of the full report or more information on the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust see <http://www.churchilltrust.com.au>

